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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the use of children's literature to develop interdisciplinary units, including components to help students (many with learning, behavioral, or emotional disabilities) develop appropriate social skills. The program focused on three books by Newbery award winner, Katherine Paterson: "Jacob Have I Loved," "The Great Gilly Hopkins," and "Bridge to Terebithia". The program's premise is that a well-written story can teach appropriate social skills and also serve as a basis for academic work. Teaching techniques include use of graphic organizers, linear models, and use of five-step lesson plans based on the direct instruction model. The three books allow for exploration of a range of characters, crises, social milieus, and various academic subjects. The paper explains the program's implementation in sections that address social stories, excellent literature, and teacher training. Eight attachments offer examples of relating books to contextual and academic subjects, graphic organizers, social skills addressed in the books, the five-step lesson plan, the planning pyramid, and examples of children's writing. (Contains 20 references.) (DB)

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Seventh Connecticut State University Faculty Research Conference

The Stories of Katherine Paterson: Interdisciplinary Teaching Units and the Development of Social Skills

The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how character studies in children's literature can be used to design interdisciplinary teaching units with a concentration on developing appropriate social skills. This presentation will present a written paper with the use of posters to graphically demonstrate key concepts. In particular, we will concentrate on three particular works of Katherine Paterson, a Newberry Award winning author. The books that we will examine are The Great Gilly Hopkins, Jacob Have I Loved, and Bridge to Terebithia.

These books afford a teacher the opportunity to develop interdisciplinary units as well as examine the struggle that a child encounters when required to make socially appropriate decisions. The characters in these works can become the topics for deeper conversation and, at times, models for mature and acceptable choice making for children. It is our purpose to share our insights and explore ethical implications.

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Hypothesis

Using excellent children's literature, a teacher can evoke significant social meaning while developing serious academic lessons.

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An Introduction to the Poster Session

The American classroom has been undergoing a transformation since the mid-1980s. Through changes in legislation and court mandates, children with disabilities are increasingly being placed in general education classrooms. While this is a positive trend for children, the teacher is faced with a broader array of skill levels in her students (Salend, 2001; Turnbull, et al., 2002).

The two areas that are effected by this trend towards inclusion are general academics skills and social skills. More than half of all the students with disabilities are classified with some type of learning disability and associated language disorder (Turnbull et al., 2002). Many of these students have accompanying emotional or behavioral disorders. We developed this paper from our own teaching experiences, utilizing proven applications, working with teachers in training, and working with children who are considered at-risk because of behavior problems. (Goldstein, & McGinnis, 1997; Salend, 2001; Turnbull et al., 2002; Wood & Long, 1991).

Social Stories

We have worked with several techniques that would allow us to use social skills development as a means to improve academic skills.There are teaching techniques that are designed for specific disabilities and with modifications these techniques can be employed across the disciplines. An effective approach in teaching children with autism is the development of "social stories" (Swaggart & Gagnon, 1995) An effective approach in teaching children who lack appropriate social skills is to develop small stories around a particular skill. For instance scenes are created from a child's experiences in which he has behaved inappropriately. An adult develops scenarios

based on the child's behavior and using the social stories the child practices appropriate social behavior (Norris & Dattilio, 1999; Swaggart & Gagnon, 1995). This approach has been successful when parents and educators work with children on the autism spectrum.

We used these principles within small groups in order to focus on group behaviors. These small groups are designed along the format suggested by Johnson, Johnson & Holubec (1993). The group might be working on an academic skill; for instance, understanding the relationship of the weather to people living on the Chesapeake Bay. Before the students begin the academic lesson, the teacher makes a T-chart that includes appropriate individual social skills required for positive group participation. The children and the teacher explore "what does it look like?" and "what does it sound like?" Then the teacher and the students focus on the actualization of the appropriate social skills for successful group work.

Inappropriate, or inadequate, social skills are primary characteristic of children with autism (Holmes, 1998; Norris & Dattilio, 1999). Our experience, and the experiences related to us by other professionals, indicates that many children have not developed or learned appropriate social skills regardless of disabling conditions (Goldstein & McGinnis, 1997; Leonardi, 2001). We have utilized a variety of techniques to teach social skills to children, especially children with disabilities. We have utilized a systematic social skills program such as Skillstreaming to address specific skills (Goldstein & McGinnis, 1997; Leonardi, Roberts, & Wasoka, 2001). While these programs have been effective in modifying inappropriate behavior, especially for

individual children, we wanted to utilize a method of social skill interventions that would connect us to academic programs.

Excellent Literature

Our premise has been that a well-written story can serve the purpose of teaching appropriate social skills and also serve as a basis for academic work. This approach has been well received by the students with whom we have worked. Reading is the key to this approach. The child and the teacher become active readers. Children can read on their own, read in small groups, and the teacher can read aloud to the students. Our experience has been that students, even at the college level, enjoy having a good book read to them. Children enjoy hearing stories with which they are familiar. They will read to themselves, listen to an adult read a story, and discuss key passages among themselves (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 1997).

We selected the works of Katherine Paterson as an exemplary way in which to teach children about excellent literature and to develop interdisciplinary units that included a social skills component. Paterson has developed a body of work that includes compelling stories of Americana. The three selections that we have referenced tell unique stories of children coming of age in America.

Jacob Have I Loved (Paterson, 1980) takes place on an island in the Chesapeake Bay. It relates the tension between twin sisters and their relationships with adult characters. The relationships with nature and people provide the grounding for academic studies in history, geography, science, and economics. While the teacher and the student are able to explore these academic areas, the social stories that are

embedded in the novel serve as benchmarks for social skill development. (See Attachments #1 & #2)

We use a graphic organizer such as Inspiration software to develop a graphic representation of the story and then we develop a linear model as well. This provides the teacher and the student with different methods for connecting conceptual parts of the story. In effect using graphic and linear models is a recognition that children can learn using various conceptual processes. Our initial purpose for using these books was to develop another method for helping children to examine personal crisis. A personal crisis could emerge from peer disputes, breaking rules, or a traumatic event in their personal or home life. Two other books that we utilize on a frequent basis are The Bridge to Terebithia (Paterson, 1977) and The Great Gilly Hopkins (Paterson, 1978). Bridge is a book that explores friendships, families, and tragedy. Gilly Hopkins explores the life of a girl in foster-care who gets what she wants but not what she expects. These three books allow us to explore a range of characters, crises, social milieus, and various academic subjects. Each book has brought our students to a higher awareness of how reading and writing can expand their sensitivity and skills. Children in a crisis, such as living in unstable foster care, confronting a bully, or dealing with death, are able to use characterizations found in the novels to identify with personal feelings.

When we work with children in crisis, our approach is to first calm the child (Wood & Long, 1991). The second step in our intervention is to walk the child through the events that caused the crisis. Many of the children who we teach react inappropriately to

emotional situations. Since we work in special education settings, these approaches help children to more effectively work in inclusive settings. These first steps at intervention are intended to stabilize a potentially explosive situation. The third step in this intervention process is to teach the child appropriate social skills for a similar situation (Goldstein & McGinnis, 1997; Leonardi, et al., 2001).

Several methods are utilized to provide instruction in building pro-social skills. We can develop social stories; attempt to process previous situations; and examine fictional characters who encounter difficult social situations. In our classrooms we utilize all of these approaches. This presentation supports our belief that the use of good literature is an appropriate way in which to teach across disciplines and also to develop pro-social skills while fostering an inclusive classroom environment.

Included in the attachments are the various academic areas that are addressed as well as ten of the social skills that we frequently encounter (See Attachments #1, #2, #3, and #4 for Academic Concepts and Attachment #5 for a sample of the Social Skills). We have included some of the children's writing that has emerged from the relational aspects of these novels. Children have been inspired to write about significant events in their lives and are willing to share the emotions that emerged from these events (See Attachment #6).

Teacher Training

These novels as well as other children's books are excellent devices for teaching prospective teachers of the disabled how to develop comprehensive unit plans and lesson plans. Using good literature as a foundation for interdisciplinary units provides a classroom teacher with instructional tools that go beyond the utilization of textbooks.

"Literature as a learning tool has been a natural way for students to think and acquire knowledge" (Morrison & Rude, 2002). As a teacher-training tool, developing a planning process causes the teacher-in-training to think beyond the pages of the novel. We work with college students and our advice is that "the best way to understand these books and how they can have a positive social and academic impact on children is for you to read one of the books. If you previously have read one of these selections, you might consider reading the book a second time." This technique is a cornerstone for a curriculum and methods course that is part of the university's requirements for a special education credential.

There are several key teaching strategies that we include in teacher preparation programs. Basic elements of Skillstreaming (Goldstein & McGinnis, 1997; Leonardi, et al., 2001) and Life Space Crisis Intervention (Wood & Long, 1991) are key elements of this instruction. These techniques provide the social basis for developing ethical and empathetic teaching strategies.

In order to organize the conceptual and academic material in a logical manner we encourage teachers to develop graphic organizers similar to or the same as those developed using the software package Inspiration. This provides an overview of all of the topics that will be studied during the reading of the book (see attachment #4). Each unit can be organized within a planning pyramid (Schumm, Vaughn, & Leavell, 1994). This format provides a teacher with a technique to develop a concept along a range of academic skills and intellectual development (see attachment #7). As an example, using weather as an academic area of interest, lessons can be developed for students with a

reading level that is three years above grade level and lessons can be developed within the same area for students who are non-verbal, non-readers, with serious disabilities.

For the purpose of organizing discrete lesson plans, we introduce the techniques of five-step lesson plans based on Madeline Hunter's Direct Instruction Model (Humboldt, 2002). In certain aspects the Hunter model is similar in design to the Skillstreaming model (Leonardi, et al., 2001). These plans are roughly designed with goals, objectives, an introduction of the lesson, instruction, guided practice, and individual or small group practice. These lessons are completed when a child can demonstrate a level of competence with the learned skill. Competence can be measured through formative evaluations, as the unit and the lessons progress, and with a summative evaluation. We prefer the development of student portfolios to provide a compilation of exemplary student work.

The purpose of requiring teachers-in-training to create units and lessons with these models is to provide them with hands-on practice. Using graphic representations of planning and development provides a basis for effective teaching practices, especially when considering special education issues. With inclusionary efforts, several teachers may be involved in developing classroom lessons (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997). Research indicates that teachers, especially at the elementary level, recognize the importance of inclusive education for most children (Leonardi, 2001). Teachers discuss inclusion from a social, academic, and ethical perspective. By providing applicable models, and using excellent content, teachers are better prepared to meet

the challenges of inclusion in American public schools. It should be noted that public schools are required by law to provide an education in the least restrictive environment.

In teacher preparation programs we recognize a reality that public school teachers, especially because of inclusionary efforts, require a higher level training. These professionals are continuously exposed to the results of court rulings, policy decisions, and legislation that mandate broader interpretations of full inclusion and least restrictive environments.

About the Author

We use the books of Katherine Paterson because they provide a high level of excellence in children's literature. The stories have an emotional impact on children and adults. The scenarios have deep meaning for the reader. These are captivating books. Paterson was born in China and lived in Japan. In her 1977 acceptance of the National Book Award for The Master Puppeteer she said, "I don't write for children, I say. I write for myself and then look in the catalog to see how old I am" (Silverman, 1990). This approach to her writing is what, we would argue, gives such powerful authenticity to her stories.

Besides winning the National Book Award for The Master Puppeteer, Paterson won National Book Awards for The Great Gilly Hopkins and Bridge to Terebithia. Additionally, The Great Gilly Hopkins was a Newberry Award Honor Book and Bridge to Terebithia and Jacob Have I Loved won Newberry Awards, an annual award for the best children's book. Books, to Paterson, connect the reader to a wider world so that a story and its characters broaden our view of people and of the events that determine

who they are; who we are. "Just as books can tie us to the wonder of the natural world, they can tie us even closer to the wonder of human nature ... A character so memorable that long after memory of the plot has dimmed, the person is still so real that you could carry on a conversation with him or her..."(Paterson, 2001, p. 16). Gilly Hopkins search for her mother; the relationship between Leslie and Jesse in Bridge to Terebithia; and the sibling rivalry between Louise and Caroline in Jacob Have I Loved; all are captivating characters dealing with relationships, some times well and some times not so well. The books are, as are most good books, conversations among characters and the characters and the reader. We would argue that it is conversation that connect us to our world, teaches us, instructs us, and enriches us. While the academic grounding of these books is powerful, there is an enormity of how the characters meet the challenges of human emotions such as jealousy, greed, love, and death.

Summary

We focused this presentation on these books and this author as a grounding for elements of great teaching. Excellent teaching requires excellent context and broad concepts. Excellent teaching requires that the teacher grow with her students. Using these stories has enabled us to learn and to grow with our students. It may be that the most powerful aspect of excellent teaching is that the teacher allows herself; through the vehicle of a good book, to slip into the wonder of the conversation with their students and the author; transcending age, power, and time.

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Attachment #1

JACOB HAVE I LOVE

Contextual & Academic Subjects

Economics
Living on an Island
Effects of Weather
Living off of the Sea

Geography
Islands
Effects of Weather
Chesapeake Bay

History
Depression America
Pearl Harbor
World War II
Invasion of Normandy

Science
Environment of the Bay
Weather Patterns
Hurricanes
Crustaceans
Weather & Normandy

Attachment #2

BRIDGE TO TEREBITHIA

Contextual & Academic Subjects

Economics
The Modern Farm
Unemployment

Geography
Rural America
Virginia

History
Hippies
Washington DC
Virginia
National Monuments

Science
Animal Husbandry
Weather
Forests

Arts
Cartoons
Poetry
Art Museums
Music & History

Attachment #3

THE GREAT GILLY HOPKINS

Economics
Foster Parenting
Poverty
Wealth

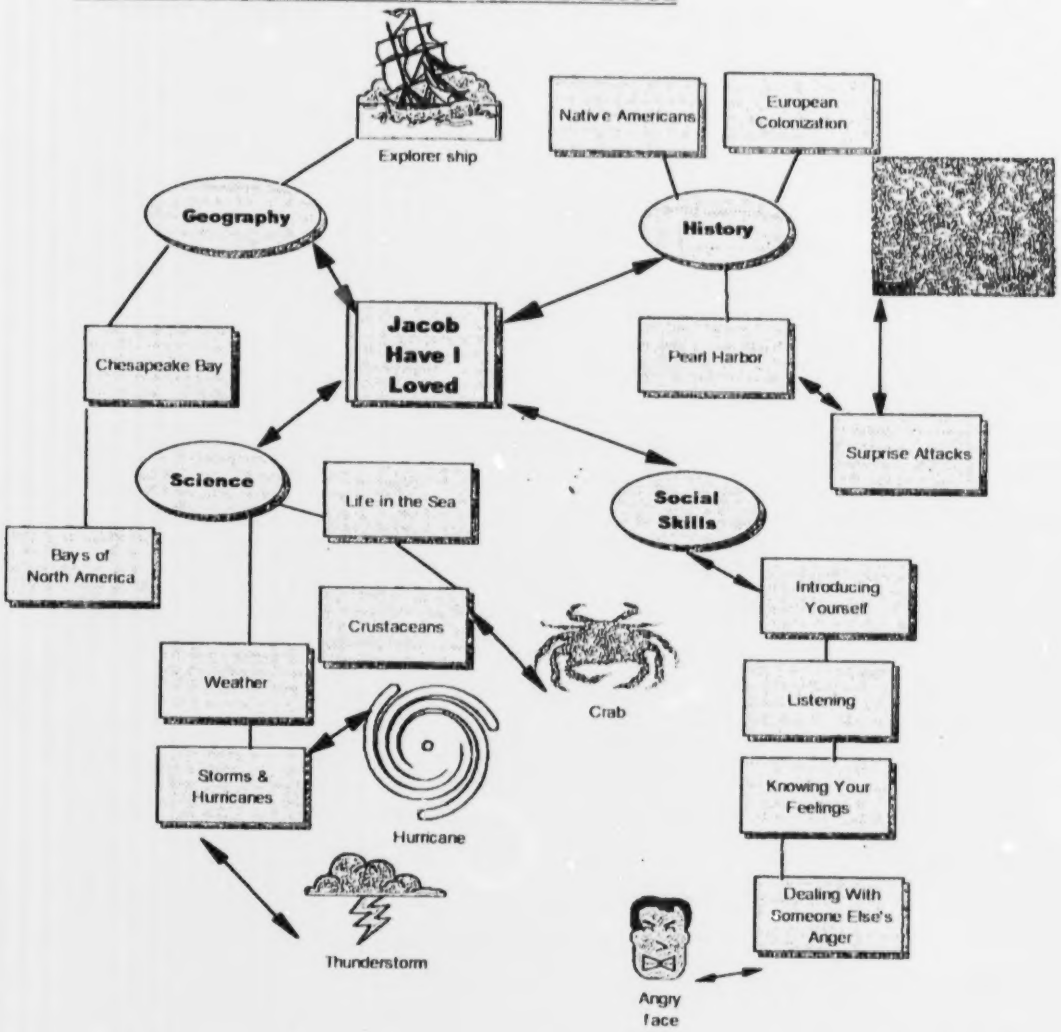
Geography
Small Town America
California

History
Vietnam
Protest
Civil Rights

Science
Planes & History of Flight
Sight & Vision

Attachment #4

A graphic Organization of Jacob Have I Loved



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attachment #5

The Social Skills

These are skills that evolved from the three children's stories. These skills are based on work developed by Arnold Goldstein at Syracuse University.

1. **Dealing with Fear**
2. **Sharing Something**
3. **Negotiating**
4. **Avoiding Trouble With Others**
5. **Keeping Out Of Fights**
6. **Understanding The Feelings Of Others**
7. **Standing Up For A Friend**
8. **Dealing With Group Pressure**
9. **Responding To Failure**
10. **Responding To Persuasion**

Attachment #6

Weather

Weather is an example of how a science unit can be developed from a well written children's book. In Jacob Have I Loved a hurricane hits the island on which the book is based. The study of the effects of weather on the island, weather and the Chesapeake Bay, and the power of hurricanes all have an impact on this book. In the Bridge to Terebithia one of the main characters dies in an attempt to cross a rain swollen stream.

In both books weather is a key factor in the development of the story. Weather then becomes a scientific investigation with a personal connection between the reader and the characters.

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attachment #7

Five Step Lesson Plan (simplified)

A Social Skills Lesson

Purpose of the lesson is to Understand The Feelings of Others

Step 1: Share an experience where someone was expressing a feeling and you did not understand the feeling.

Step 2: Would you like to be able to learn a skill that will help you to understand when someone is happy, sad, angry?

Step 3: Let's write down feelings that have been expressed & you were unaware of the reason.

Step 4: Let's role play a situation.
The teacher does a role play on an angry sibling who did not make a team or get a part in a play.

Step 5: Let's practice these steps:

a. watch the other person
b. Listen to what the person is saying
c. Figure out what the person is feeling
d. Think about ways to show you understand
e. Decide on the best way to do it

Let's practice

A History Lesson

Purpose of the lesson is to explore surprise attacks

Step 1: List and describe historical events
a. Trojan Horse
b. Washington & the Delaware
c. Pearl Harbor
d. Yom Kippur War
e. Tet Offensive
f. World Trade Center

Step 2: Have the children split into small groups and provide material for them to develop projects, including arts & crafts

Step 3: Share projects with class and place events on maps & timeline

Step 4: Pass out teacher-made worksheets for homework

Step 5: Next morning class meeting discuss previous lesson & homework

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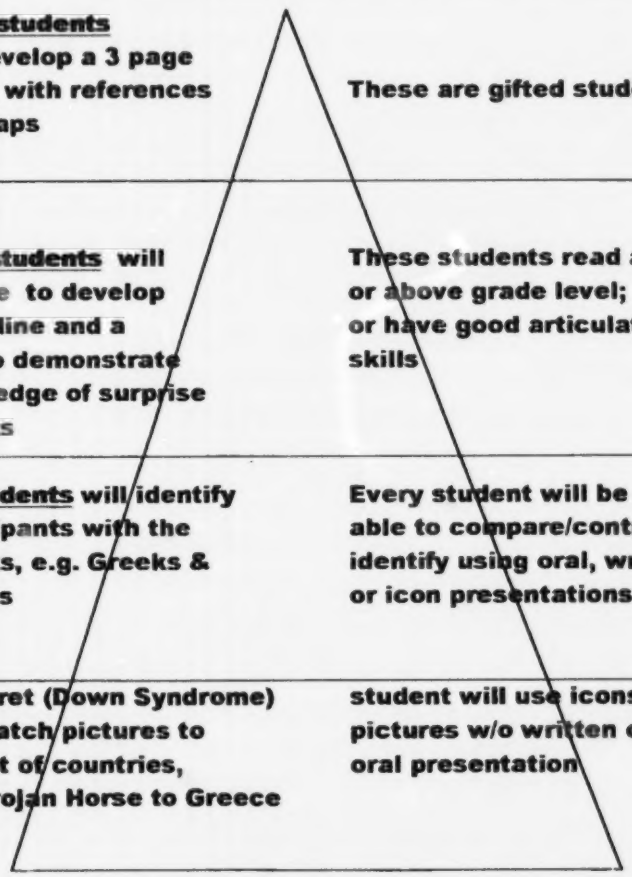
attachment #8

The Planning Pyramid

Goal
To understand the element of surprise attacks to historical events.

Objective #1: **The children will be able to describe a surprise attack in a historical context by writing or describing orally the major parties and the geographical area.**

Objective #2: **The children will be able to point to an area on a map and with 100% accuracy connect an event with a location, 2 or more events.**



Some students will develop a 3 page paper, with references and maps

These are gifted students

Most students will be able to develop a timeline and a map to demonstrate knowledge of surprise attacks

These students read at or above grade level; or have good articulation skills

All students will identify participants with the attacks, e.g. Greeks & Trojans

Every student will be able to compare/contrast identify using oral, written, or icon presentations

Margaret (Down Syndrome) will match pictures to cut-out of countries, e.g. Trojan Horse to Greece

student will use icons & pictures w/o written or oral presentation

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Attachment #9

What Children Have Written

**But if I pray to god each night
and pass each day with a smile
I know that I will be quite all right
for maybe quite a while**

L.

**I love the way you
shared your love
but the day you left
was the worst day of my life**

A.

I never got to say "Mom" to my mother. I don't even know if she ever loved me. She left me with her best friend and never came back to me.

F.

It was early in the day and nothing was going wrong. Not that I was aware at that point to be exact. All day we had walked around downtown. Rode dirt bikes, spent our last waking moments together. Savoring each moment we had with each other. The day wore down and the summer breeze bitterly turned cold.

H.

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